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The Phenomenality and Intentional Structure of We-Experiences.

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Abstract

When you and I share an experience, each of us lives through a we-experience. The paper claims that we-experiences have unique phenomenality and structure. First, we-experiences' phenomenality is characterised by the fact that they feel like ours to their subject. This specific phenomenality is contended to derive from the way these experiences self-represent: a we-experience exemplifies us-ness or togetherness because it self-represents as mine qua ours. Second, living through a we-experience together with somebody else is not to have this experience in parallel with the experience of the other. Rather, the paper argues that a we-experience is partly co-constituted by the experience of the other. After offering an account of the phenomenality and constitution of we-experiences, which traces these two elements back to the subject's self-understanding as a group member, the paper argues for the claim that an experience's for-us-ness is committal to this experience being co-constituted by another we-experience.

Keywords: we-experience, self-representation, subjective character, phenomenal consciousness, constitution.

1. Introduction

Imagine that you come to know that I recently watched Bong Joon-Ho's last movie, "Parasite," and that I really liked it. You decide to watch it, too. As it happens, you also really like it and spend quite some time interpreting its ending. Now contrast this scenario with one in which you and I decide to watch the movie together (for a similar example, see Zahavi 2015: 90)—we really enjoy it and, over beers, we debate over possible interpretations of its ending. Now ask yourself: in which respect are your experiences in the first scenario and those in the second similar and in which respect are they different?

On the one hand, the experiences you undergo in the first scenario and those you undergo in the second are similar because they are the same in kind. In each scenario, you live through an experience, which qualifies as a conative attitude (a decision), as an affective attitude (enjoying something), as an epistemic activity (interpreting its ending), etc. On the other, they differ because, in the second scenario, but not in the first, you have shared these experiences with me. "Sharing" is used here in a specific sense. In the first scenario, you have enjoyed the movie, I did it, too, and you are aware of that fact—but no experiential sharing has taken place. In the second, you and I have lived through these experiences *together* and this is what characterizes the sense of "sharing" at issue in this paper. If these conjectures are on the right track, then they confront us with an important challenge: what makes an experience shared?

Recently, experiential sharing has attracted a lively interest in philosophy of mind (Krueger 2013, León et al. 2019, Pettit 2018, Schmid 2014, Zahavi 2015, 2018). Against this background, the present paper has two aims. The first is to pinpoint how, precisely, an individual experience and a we-experience differ. Section 2 of this paper fulfils this desideratum by arguing that a we-experience is an experience lived through by an individual subject, that (i) exemplifies a peculiar subjective character (for-us-ness) and (ii) is partly co-constituted by the we-experience of another individual. Current debate has already drawn attention to we-experiences' (i) for-us-ness and (ii) co-constitution (see Salice 2015a, Zahavi 2015, and León et al. 2019), but Section 3 offers a novel account of these two specific traits, which is the second (and main) desideratum of the paper.

Section 3 addresses this desideratum by defending the idea that (i) and (ii) presuppose a specific self-understanding—this is a self-understanding as a group member. Advancing theses presented in previous work (Salice/Miyazono 2019), the paper describes this self-understanding as a representation that, by altering the way in which experiences self-represent, generates for-us-ness and intrinsically links one we-experience to the other's experience. These two features enter a close relation: Disjunctively, an experience either exemplifies for-us-ness (and thus is partly co-constituted by the we-experience of another subject) *or* it does not exemplify that subjective property (and thus is not partly co-constituted by the other experience). To put this differently, an experience's for-us-ness is committal to this experience being partly co-constituted by another we-experience.

Before embarking in the investigation, one important remark about the paper's scope is in order: The article is exclusively concerned with the sharing of phenomenally conscious mental states ("experiences") in face-to-face encounters within small-case groups (mainly: dyads), where the shared experiences mainly are episodic emotions. Because of the, admittedly, narrow scope of the investigation, the claims developed in the next sections are not supposed to provide a general account of experiential sharing as such—not to mention of collective intentionality. However, the conclusion justifies this narrow scope by highlighting the developmental and conceptual relevance that the scenarios discussed in the paper bear for a general theory of experiential sharing.

1. We-Experiences: What They Are and What They Are Not.

It might be helpful to introduce the notion of a we-experience by modifying the initial example: you and I decide to meet at the cinema to watch "Parasite." As we exit, we encounter an old friend who asks us about the movie. I reply: "we enjoyed it very much" and you nod. In my reply, I make use of a collective (not distributive) sense of the first personal plural pronoun "we" (more on this below). This usage enables me to report a peculiar experience—one that I had *together* with you. The question concerns the facts that make that sentence true: under which conditions is my reply true?

One possible way to answer the question is by claiming that "we enjoyed the movie very much" is true if it is true that

(1) I enjoyed the movie
(2) you enjoyed the movie
(3) I know 2
(4) you know 1
(5) I know 4
(6) you know 3
(*n*) …

On a view like this (see Quinton 1975), the sentence is made true by individuals undergoing individual experiences (as indicated by 1 and 2) under condition of common knowledge.[1]

However, it has been noted that this account is doomed to fail (see Searle 1990). It has to fail because it is vulnerable to counterexamples. Imagine that you and I sit near a couple (X and Y) at the cinema. I hear X expressing to Y his enjoyment and, since I am annoyed by people chatting in the cinema, I let X notice that I disapprove of his conduct (in one of the many—more or less subtle—ways humans have to express their disappointment). X, therefore, comes to know that I have heard him and, since he remains silent for the remainder of the movie, I know that he knows that I have heard him. However, the movie is really good and I can't help but laugh aloud at some of the scenes, which triggers a retaliatory reaction in X, who reprimands me in turn for being so boisterous. Embarrassed by my own behaviour, I shut up for the rest of the movie. I know that X has heard me laughing and, thus, that he is aware of my enjoyment. But also, I know that, since I am now quiet and I know X has noticed my silence, X knows that I know that he is aware of my enjoyment.

Although the example does not climb all the infinite steps in the spiral of recursive beliefs postulated by the notion of common knowledge, one can assume, by hypothesis, that conditions (1)-(*n*) are satisfied among X and I. If so, it should become clear that the intentional situation X and I happen to be in is clearly different from the one which you and I are living through. At the exit of the cinema, I won't be predisposed to report to our old friend that, when it comes to X and me, "we [collectively, i.e., together] enjoyed the movie" (although in certain circumstances I might report the situation by using the *distributive* sense of the first person plural pronoun: "we [distributively, i.e., X and I] enjoyed the movie"). This indicates that, however it ought to be described, only the relation your experience and my experience entered deserves to be qualified as a genuine case of experiential sharing.

[1] Common knowledge has been spelled out here as a set of recursive beliefs ranging over others' beliefs. This is the standard understanding of common knowledge, which is not the only one possible account of this notion, though (see Vanderschraaf & Sillari 2014).

One can therefore conclude that it is possible for facts (1)-(*n*) to exist among two individuals X and Y, but for the sentence "we [collectively, together] enjoyed the movie" to remain false. If that is correct, then one has reason to distinguish between these three intentional situations:

a. I ψ [where ψ is a psychological verb[2]]
b. I ψ, you ψ, and this is common knowledge among us
c. we [collectively, together] ψ

But then, what is it that characterises experiences of form (c.)? I submit that two features play a role here (which is not to say that these are the only features relevant to we-experiences): my we-experience (i) is partly constituted by your experience and (ii) exemplifies a peculiar subjective character, i.e., for-us-ness (see also Zahavi 2015, León et al. 2017). The remainder of this section aims at identifying these two features by setting them apart from other related, and yet different, features of conscious experiences. Section 3 accounts for these features and come back to the question about the truth-maker of "we enjoyed the movie very much" (and of its generalisation as in c.).

(i) *Co-constitution*

Let us start by focusing on (i). In the example, my enjoyment and your enjoyment are intrinsically related in the sense that my enjoyment is partly constituted by your enjoyment (and vice versa). By contrast, my experience and X's experience are not constitutively related to each other, but merely run in parallel.

The constitution typical of shared experiences is what classical phenomenologists, and especially Max Scheler, have pointed to by speaking of "co-experiencing." In his notorious example of two parents co-experiencing sorrow or anguish for their dead child (Scheler 2008: 12f.), Scheler suggests that co-experiencing enables two individuals to feel the "same" emotion. The example has sparked systematic and exegetical controversies on how one should understand the sameness of the emotion Scheler describes (Schmid 2009: 69; Zahavi 2018), but here I will disregard this issue (see Salice 2015a). The only element I want to retain from Scheler is his idea that, in experiential sharing, individuals live through experiences that are intrinsically intermingled or partly co-constituted. As a first approximation, one could say that two experiences, *x* and *y*, are partly co-constituted, if *x* partly constitutes *y* and *y* partly constitutes *x*. In an important respect, to be further clarified in section 3, *x* would not be the experience it is without *y*, and vice versa.

It is important to highlight that the constitution at stake in co-experiencing is specific and should be distinguished from other forms of constitution. At this juncture, it may be helpful to canvass two such forms (in rough outline) to identify the specificity of constitution in we-experiences.

The first form relates to the possibility for the mind to be extended. Advocators of the so-called "Extended Mind Thesis" defend the idea according to which cognition or mentality extends in the environment and thus is not confined within the skull of individuals. Theorists of the Extended Mind may be favourably disposed towards the claim that some of an individual's experiences are partly

[2] One should be reminded of the paper's narrow scope, which constraints how ψ is to be understood here (see introduction and conclusion).

constituted by the experiences of other individuals.[3] So, for instance, Chalmers and Clark write in their seminal paper: "the waiter at my favorite restaurant might act as a repository of my beliefs about my favorite meals" (Clark & Chalmers 1998: 17f). On this theory, it can therefore be said that some of my beliefs are constituted by certain states of the waiter. The view has not been uncontested (Adams & Aizawa 2001), but it is not necessary for the purposes of this paper to enter this debate. The existence of this form of constitution may be simply taken for granted and, in so doing, one can raise the question of whether this sense of constitution is relevant to we-experiences. The answer seems to be negative (see also León et al. 2019: 4851): even though your preferences about meals are constituted by the waiter's mental states, these are *your* preferences about the meals. This holds even if one introduces reciprocation into the example: imagine the waiter has a preference for Italian wines, as you do. He can easily retrieve your preferences in his cognitive system because he associates your face with the bottle of Barbaresco you usually order. However, he is very forgetful about his own preferences and you, for reasons we do not need to get into, have written down those preferences on your notebook. When he asks you about his preferences, you retrieve them by looking into your notebook, which serves as your repository. In this case, the preferences are co-constituted, but they are not *your* (plural) preferences.

Looking into debates about social cognition may help identify a second sense of constitution. One view that is gaining traction in this area of research maintains that a subject can genuinely perceive mental states of others (Krueger and Overgaard 2012). On this view, my understanding of your sadness, in certain cases, is my perception of your sadness (not my inference that you are sad or my projection of sadness onto you). Suppose that the direct perception approach is merged with a relationalist account of perception. Despite the many differences among the various positions in the relationalist camp, one claim that is endorsed by relationalists quite generally is the idea that a state qualifies as perceptual only if it is partly constituted by the (perceived) object (see, e.g., Campbell 2002). Combination of the direct perception approach to social cognition with a relationalist account of perception may result in the view that the perceived state constitutes the perceiving state: e.g., when I perceive your sadness, your sadness partly constitutes my perceptual state. Let us assume that this claim is sound without further scrutiny and ask: is this the sense of constitution at stake in we-experiences? Again, the answer can only be negative: the relation of constitution between your sadness and my perceptual experience does not qualify my experience as a we-experience. The same holds if one adds reciprocation to the scenario: suppose that I perceive you perceiving me, while you perceive me perceiving you. The two states are co-constituted, but my perception remains mine and yours remains yours.

Obviously, this last case involves *social* experiences, but not all social experiences are we-experiences. In fact, the situation at stake can be exhaustively described as an I-Thou encounter, which lacks any sense of us or for-us-ness (in the scenario at stake, you and I could be mortal enemies perceiving each other). As the next subsection claims, for-us-ness is essential to we-experiences (which is not to say that I-Thou encounters cannot be accompanied by for-us-ness). But then, what is for-us-ness?

[3] Note that Clark and Chalmers are reluctant to make extendedness claims about "experiences" by even suggesting that consciousness is internal (Clark & Chalmers 1998: 10, but see Ward 2012, Krueger 2014 for a different take). Although these considerations could be taken to support the view that the notion of constitution in the debate about the Extended Mind is different from the one at stake in experiential sharing, I sidestep these issues and, for the sake of the argument, accept the possibility for phenomenally conscious states to be extended. (I am thankful to Joel Walmsley for pushing me on this point.)

(ii) *Phenomenality*

We-experiences have peculiar phenomenality: an experience had in parallel with another person feels differently from an experience had together with another person. To address this issue, it might be important to start with some general considerations about the phenomenality of an intentional experience. It is usually assumed that differences in the phenomenality of an experience may concern its qualitative character or its subjective character. Kriegel, e.g., distinguishes between the two characters as follows: "a phenomenally conscious state's qualitative character is what makes it the phenomenally conscious state it is, while its subjective character is what makes it a phenomenally conscious state at all" (Kriegel 2009: 1, see also Levine 2001). And further: "the qualitative character is what varies among conscious experiences, while subjective character is what is common to them" (Kriegel 2011: 86).

The qualitative character of an experience has also been called its "what-it-is-likeness." The psychological mode of an experience (or its "manner," Chalmers 2004, or "quality," Husserl 2001) combined with its content contributes to—if not exhaustively determines (Crane 2003)—the what-it-is-likeness of this experience. Suppose that, perhaps at different times, you live through the following three experiences:

1. I enjoy "Parasite"
2. I enjoy Otto Dix' Self-Portrait
3. I dislike "Parasite"

When considered with respect to their qualitative character, the experience reported by (1) is different from the experience reported by (2). Their difference is grounded in the different intentional contents of the two experiences. Similarly, the experience in (1) is different from the experience in (3). Here, the difference is grounded not in the content, but in the different mode of the two experiences.

The subjective property of an experience is sometimes labelled "for-me-ness." In a recent paper, Guillot (2017) distinguishes for-me-ness from mineness (and me-ness). For-me-ness is the subject's characteristic awareness of her experience, whereas mineness is the awareness a subject has of the experience *as hers* (by contrast, me-ness is the awareness a subject has *of herself* while living through an experience.) The relation between for-me-ness and mineness is debated in the literature: For instance, Guillot (but see also O'Conaill 2017) claims that the two properties are not co-extensive, whereas Zahavi (2004) (among others—for further references see O'Conaill 2017, footnote 3) argue for their equivalence. For the sake of this paper, I consider these two properties equivalent by understanding for-me-ness as the way in which an experience is given to its subject as *her* experience or the way in which the subject is aware of an experience as *hers* (see also footnote 11 below).

Now, if considered with respect to their subjective character, experiences (1) to (3) listed above are on a par: they all exemplify for-me-ness. However, let us now apply these considerations to the phenomenality of we-experiences. Suppose you undergo the following we-experiences (at different times):

4. we enjoy "Parasite"
5. we dislike "Parasite"

With respect to the qualitative character, one could argue that the we-experience you live through in (4) feels just like as the experience in (1) feels like (and the same can be said for (5) and (3)).[4] By contrast, the use of the first-person plural pronoun (in its collective—not distributive—sense) indicates that (4) feels different from (1), and (5) from (3): (1) and (3) exemplify for-me-ness, (4) and (5) exemplify for-us-ness. This signals that the phenomenal difference between we-experiences and individual experiences relies on the different subjective character of these experiences (see also Schmid 2014, León et al. 2019).[5] To come back to Scheler's example: the mourning the two parents undergo is felt to be theirs (or: *ours*) and, *crucially*, this feature cannot be accounted for by the mere belief that the other is living through an experience that is the same in kind as mine (meaning: the awareness that the other is living through an experience, which is of the same kind as mine, is not yet able to generate for-us-ness, as the discussion about common knowledge in the previous section has revealed).

One way to make this character explicit is by reformulating (4) and (5) as

4*. I enjoy "Parasite" as our enjoyment
5*. I dislike "Parasite" as our dislike

Or, what I take to be equivalent, as:

4**. I live through [or: I experience] the enjoyment of "Parasite" as our enjoyment
5**. I live through [or: I experience] the dislike of "Parasite" as our dislike

In the next section, I advance the conjecture that for-us-ness can be described as a transformation of for-me-ness—more precisely, when an experience is given to me as ours, it self-represents in a specific way.

[4] This is too quick, though: individual experiences like (1) or (3) do not differ from we-experiences like (4) or (5) exclusively in their subjective character as, typically, the qualitative character, too, will be different. On the one hand, my awareness of your experience of the movie, even though it won't contribute to an analysis or (4) (or of (5)), presumably has an impact on the qualitative character of (4) (or of (5)). On the other, (4) and (5) can be accompanied by a specific hedonic valence, which (1) and (3) lack. Sometimes, this valence is positive (Salmela and Nagatsu 2017), but it can also be negative. This indicates that factors incl. the kind of shared experience, the kind of intentional object, and several circumstantial factors, can account for variations in the qualitative character of we-experiences.

[5] Is this the only way in which the difference between these experiences can be cashed out? No. At least three other options offer themselves. First, one could aim at analysing (4) by sophisticating the strategy dismissed in the previous subsection: (4) could be a matter of experiences with individual subjective character, common knowledge, *and* some other relevant relations between the experiences of the individuals. Second, one could claim that (1) and (4) differ in their psychological mode. Third, (1) and (4) could be contended to have different subjects: an individual subject in (1) and a group subject in (4). All these different approaches have been defended esp. in the debate about shared intentions, where, e.g., Bratman (2014) exemplifies the first approach, Searle (1990) the second, and List & Pettit (2011) the third. This is not the place to address these theories, but discussions (and critiques) of these approaches can be found in Overgaard/Salice 2019, Salice/Miyazono 2019, Salice 2015b.

3. The Constitution and Subjective Character of We-experiences: An Account

This section starts by addressing we-experiences' subjective character and then discusses their constitution. It does so by zooming out from these experiences taken in isolation and by trying to shed light on their psychological pre-conditions. This approach exploits the idea that we-experiences—just like experiences of any kind—do not occur in a psychological void, but enter important relations with other experiences. More specifically, it is claimed that one important pre-condition of we-experiences is that they presuppose the subject's self-understanding as group member.

(i) *Phenomenality: The social self as one pre-condition of we-experiences' for-us-ness*

According to a prominent position in current debates about the subjective character, an experience's for-me-ness should be accounted for in terms of this experience self-representing (see Brentano 1973 and, more recently, Kriegel 2009). The idea is that every intentional experience has "double intentionality": the experience represents an (experience transcending) object, while representing itself at the same time. The second intentional relation is what makes it possible for this experience to be phenomenally conscious or to be given to a subject. Although nothing in what follows rests on the self-representationalist account of for-me-ness (for critiques against this account, see Zahavi 2004, 2019), this idea can provide initial support to the claim that the origin of for-us-ness should be searched in the way in which we-experiences self-represent (see also Schmid 2014): an experience qualifies as a we-experience when it represents itself as mine *qua* ours. But what would it mean that a we-experience represents itself as mine *qua* ours?

The idea can be refined in this way: one necessary condition for an experience to be given to me as ours is that I understand myself as group member. This self-understanding is the subject's social identity (or "social self," as social psychologists put it, Brewer 1991) to the effect that (some of) the subject's experiences—her we-experiences—can be lived through if and only if their subject entertains that identity.[6] The social self enables we-experiences to the extent to which it generates (or, if the double intentionality thesis is correct, alters) the self-representing intention which accounts for the subjective character of those experiences. To put this differently, an experience feels like our experience—it is an experience that exemplifies for-us-ness—when it is given to a subject insofar as this subject understands herself as a group member.

To use Brentano's terminology (1995): we-experiences can be said to be "superposed" on this self-understanding. Superposition (not to be confused with "supervenience") is a relation of one-sided existential dependence: an experience *x* is superposed on experience *y* iff the existence of *x* necessarily presupposes the existence of *y*, but not the converse. For instance, emotions seem to necessarily presuppose an evaluation of their intentional target and, therefore, can be said to be superposed on those evaluations (but one can evaluate something without necessarily emoting towards it).[7] Consequently,

[6] This is not to suggest that individuals have only one social self or that the social self corresponds to a particularly solidified social identity: it can, but does not have to. As social psychology has ascertained, many of our social identities constantly wax and wane, and have therefore only ephemeral existence. This consideration also indicates that the kind of group and group memberships under discussion is subjective or psychological, not objective: one can be objectively member of several groups without identifying with these groups as a member and, vice versa, one can identify with one group without being an objective member of it.

[7] The example is not meant to reflect Brentano's view about emotions.

there is a sense according to which, if one is to understand emotions, one has to also understand their underlying evaluations. Similarly, a we-experience is superposed on the social self because it necessarily presupposes it (although a social self can be had without living through we-experiences). Consequently, our understanding of we-experiences calls for an understanding of the social self, to the effect that we would not be able to understand the latter phenomenon without an understanding of the former.

These considerations lead to the question concerning the kind of experience that the self-understanding at stake here belongs to: is the social self a conative, doxastic, or affective state? By rejecting the first two options and, more cautiously, the third, this subsection highlights the specificity of this form of self-understanding, pinpoint its psychological credentials, and show how it impacts the self-representation of the experience.

Start with the hypothesis that this self-understanding is an experience of a conative nature. It has been convincingly argued that humans have a fundamental need or desire to belong (Baumeister & Leary 1995, Castro & Pacherie 2020). Presumably, there are various forms which this desire can take: one can have the desire of perpetuating one's group memberships or to become a better integrated group member. Yet, these desires presuppose that their subjects already conceive of themselves as group members. These, however, are not the sorts of situations relevant to the current discussion. For we want to clarify that form of self-understanding that in the very first place establishes the possibility to share experiences with others, and does so without relying on salient previous encounters with the others, which have already elicited that self-understanding (and, consequently, the various desires that may or may not be associated with it). The question, then, is whether this original form of self-understanding coincides with the desire to become a group member to begin with. However, this can't possibly be for such a desire (in contradistinction to the other forms of desire mentioned above) entails the belief that one is *not* (at least: yet) a group member.

The possibility of cashing out this experience as a doxastic representation like a belief may appear more promising at first glance. On this view, to understand oneself as a group member would consist in believing that one is a group member. It appears difficult to deny that our psychology does include many such beliefs: e.g., as a passport holder, you know (and thus believe) to be the member of a nation. However, it seems doubtable whether this belief (taken per se) can have the kind of impact on our experiential life we are investigating. Why? The answer is that it seems possible for a subject to believe that they are member of a certain group without this belief affecting this subject's identity, and subsequently, its psychology and agency (Salice/Miyazono 2019). However, this is precisely what the social understanding at stake is supposed to model: by conceiving of oneself as group member, the subject is immediately predisposed or motivated to act and feel as such. This is a motivation that inheres in the social self (even though it might not be acted upon). This observation unveils that the social self can't be a belief. To put this in a slogan: to believe to be a group member is not yet to feel to be a group member.

We are left with the hypothesis that the social self is an experience of an affective kind. Of course, the answer to this question hinges on how one intends the notion of affective experience, which is an important issue in itself, although peripheral to the purposes of this paper. Two observations appear relevant, however. The first is that, seemingly, that self-understanding can be established in absence of affection. For instance, Bacharach (2006) cashes out group identity as the product of a purely cognitive process (framing). This idea, however, does not necessarily exclude that one's social identity cannot be affectively coloured for, arguably, one's affiliation to a group can be as cold (merely cognitive) as it

can be hot (affectively coloured). This leads to the second observation, which is that emotions can be described in terms of representations that, concomitantly, describe and direct behaviour. For instance, an emotion of fear can be claimed to, at once, describe a threat in the environment as dangerous and direct the subject's behaviour to escape from the threat. Because of this feature, some authors (see Bayne & Fernandez 2009) have suggested that emotions are states akin to Pushmi-Pullyu representations (Millikan 1995).

Here, I leave it open whether the self-understanding as a group member necessarily has (or can possibly assume) affective features. However, I contend that emotions share an important trait with social identity. In fact, the representation pointed at by the label "social self" can be claimed to, at once, describe something and direct behaviour. More precisely, the social self describes its subject as a group member and directs her to behave as such (Salice/Miyazono 2019). This is why I submit that the psychological kind that best captures this self-understanding is that of Millikan's Pushmi-Pullyu representation (or 'PPR,' Millikan 1995). In what follows, I provide a rough description of PPRs, which is non-committal to Millikan's influential (but also controversial) teleosemantics, by discussing the impact that PPRs can have on other mental states.

As already indicated, PPRs are jointly descriptive and directive. These representations are claimed to be ontogenetically and phylogenetically prior to purely doxastic and purely conative states (and that is why they can be ascribed, e.g., to animals and insects). This is one example made by Millikan: "Consider a very primitive representation: the food call of a hen to its brood. […] Assume, what is reasonable, that this is the only proper effect that the call has on chicks, the only effect the call has been selected for. Then the call is directive, saying something like 'come here now and eat!'. But it is also a condition for proper performance of the call that there be food there when the hen calls. So the call is also descriptive, saying something like 'here's food now'" (Millikan 1995: 190).

This description can be supplemented by a further claim: PPRs have the power to impact the phenomenality of an experience. For instance, they can alter its qualitative character and thereby transform an experience of a certain kind into an experience of a different kind. Consider this example:[8] you are on a tracking tour in China where you decide to visit the scary Zhangjiajie Grand Canyon Glass Bridge. You did your fair share of mountaineering and you know that the bridge is perfectly safe. So, at *t*, you are confident that you won't have any problem in crossing the bridge. However, when you face the bridge, a PPR is activated, which describes the bridge as dangerous and instructs you to escape from the danger. It can be claimed that, in addition to other consequences, this PPR transforms the qualitative character of some of your experiences: your initial self-confidence or determination about the idea of crossing the bridge at *t'* turns into insecurity or hesitation about that very idea. By modifying the psychological mode of the initial experience, the PPR has therefore altered its overall qualitative character.

How do PPRs relate to social identity? These representations have already been linked to social identity especially within the debate about shared agency (Salice/Miyazono 2019) where it has been claimed that a large part of human joint actions (and especially joint actions which pre-school aged children engage in) are triggered and sustained by a social identity. Insofar as the social identity describes the individual as a group member, it activates a we-descriptor in terms of which the individual thinks of

[8] This is adapted from the notorious example Gendler uses to introduce aliefs as a *sui generis* psychological category (Gendler 2008). Aliefs and PPRs share important properties and could be seen as different labels for the same states (see Salice/Miyazono 2019).

herself: "I am a member of *us*." This we-descriptor is intrinsically motivating and directs the subject to act as a group member, e.g., by predisposing the subject to pro-social behaviour and in-group favouritism.

If this idea is plausible, then it may sustain our initial hypothesis, according to which PPRs—just as they can change the qualitative character of an experience—so can they also alter their subjective character. How could that be possible? Let us go back to the initial example and modify it again: suppose you decide to watch the movie and go to the cinema alone. I happen to seat near you, but we don't know each other. During the first half of the movie (*t*), each of us laugh in parallel at hilarious scenes. We are in a theatre that still includes breaks between first and second half of a movie. During the break, we have a chat. It turns out that we are both expats in this country, we are fan of the same football team, and that we have similar taste in cinema. In the second half of the movie (*t'*), we now both laugh *together*. The experience is now shared.

What has changed between *t* and *t'*? It seems sensible to say that, while chatting during the break, we have activated a social identity.[9, 10] In addition to describing yourself as a group member and to instructing to act as such, this PPR also has the power of modifying the subjective character of experiences. More specifically, it impacts the way in which the experience self-represents. Before the break, the experience of enjoying the movie was given to you as yours. The fact that you were aware of me laughing at the same scenes did not have any impact on your psychology. After the break, the experience self-represents in a specific way, which builds upon your newly acquired social identity. For-me-ness remains the property which makes the experience conscious to begin with. However, this property is now transformed: in *t*, the experience is given to you, period. In *t'*, the experience is given to you *qua* member of us and that is why you now live through the experience *as ours*.[11] This specific self-representation was enabled by the social identity you have activated during the break. Because you now understand yourself as a group member, it is possible for you to live through we-experiences with me.

(ii) *Co-constitution: The social self establishes we-experiences' partial co-constitution*

The previous subsection developed an account of we-experiences' phenomenality. One may want to conjecture that we-experience's subjective character plays an epistemic function for its subject as it

[9] Within social psychology, the psychological process that generates a social identity is usually referred to as "group identification." What stimulates group identification and, therefore, what factors lead to the activation of a social identity, is a matter of debate. It is generally assumed that these factors are numerous and variegated. Using we-language, being confronted to an outgroup, share the same destiny, sharing preferences, etc., are all factors that can increase the likelihood of group identification (Bacharach 2006: 69-94). Importantly, these factors may be quite minimal and, apparently, irrelevant: for instance, sharing aesthetic preferences (like preferring Paul Klee to Vassilij Kandinsky) has been identified as a circumstance able to trigger group identification (Tajfel et al. 1970).

[10] To be sure, the conditions for group identification are so minimal that a conversation is not even required for an understanding as a group member to be generated. If parallel laughing is taken by you and me to be revelatory of a shared background (say, the fact that we are both fans of a particular actor or that we both appreciate the kind of humour displayed at the scenes), then parallel laughing can turn into a we-experience. (I am grateful to a reviewer for drawing my attention to this point.)

[11] Suppose that for-me-ness and mineness fall apart. This would open up logical space for two different hypotheses: either for-us-ness is a modification of for-me-ness or it is a modification of mineness.

reveals the fact that the experience is not lived through by the subject alone, but together with somebody else. In fact, co-constitution is the second element that has been identified as characteristic of the we-experience in section 2. The question then concerns the structure of these experiences: in which sense are they partly co-constituted? And in which sense can one claim that a we-experience's subjective character is revelatory of this experience's structure?

To answer these questions, I follow the same strategy adopted in the previous subsection. Rather than looking for answers by focussing on we-experiences in isolation, I turn the attention to the very state that enables them in the first place, which means that I shall further discuss the specific form of self-understanding introduced in the previous subsection. The suggestion is that the constitutive link is established by the PPR underlying we-experiences. How can this suggestion be underpinned more solidly?

Start with the idea that to understand oneself as a group member has conditions of satisfaction. There are circumstances under which such understanding is fit, and it is therefore appropriate to feel, act, and think as a group member. By extension, there is a sense in which, in these circumstances, one's we-experiences are warranted. If one focuses on the conditions of satisfaction that qualify one's self-understanding as group member, one will acknowledge that at least part of these conditions depend on how the other conceives of herself. More precisely, my self-understanding is satisfied or fit only if you, too, understand yourself as a member of the same group which I understand myself to be a member of. Let us call this scenario "the good case." By contrast, the "bad case" is the one in which you have not understood yourself that way and I, therefore, have misunderstood myself as a group member.

I begin by elaborating on the good case. Recall that social identities activate a we-descriptor: the "us" in terms of which the subject conceives of herself. In the good case, the we-descriptor is licensed, and it is licensed because the other has that very same understanding: the other, too, occupies the thought expressible by "I am a member of us." Now, if you occupy that thought and I do it as well, then you and I form a group: that is what it means to be members of a (subjective or psychological) group.[12] The intentional structure of the scenario is a triadic relation: I have a we-thought (first *relatum*) if and only if you, too, have a we-thought (second *relatum*) and for us having those we-thoughts just is for our group (third *relatum*) to exist. Hence, whenever I understand myself as a member of us and you do so as well, there is (numerically) one group in terms of which you and I understand each other: our group. Despite the fact that you and I have two social selves that are numerically distinct (insofar as they are numerically distinct experiences), I understand myself in terms of the very same group that defines your social identity. Sameness here expresses token-(not type-)identity: the two experiences are different, but intrinsically linked by one and the same token-identical we-descriptor (*us*).

There is one important consequence about we-experiences to be drawn from these considerations. They conduce to the claim that, when individuals are in the good case, their we-experiences mutually constitute each other. Why? The linguistic qualifier (Baxter 2018) "[…] as ours" in "I live through ψ as ours" captures a crucial aspect of this experience: its subjective character. This subjective character, it has been argued in the previous subsection, derives from the subject's self-understanding as a member

[12] Accordingly, subjective or psychological groups are "mind-dependent entities and fictitious in the mind-dependence sense" (Tuomela 2013: 47): a group exists contingent on individuals understanding themselves as group members in a good case. Note that, even though they are mind-dependent (or fictitious), this notion of a group is explanatory relevant for it is required to understand we-experiences (and actions motivated by we-experiences).

of us. Since, in the good case, the other understands herself in the very same terms—as a member of us, where "us" is the accusative form of the token-identical we-descriptor in terms of which the first subject understands herself—the subjective character of the first we-experience is rigidly tied to the character of the second we-experience. This tie (*us*) is precisely the element, based on which the two experiences can be claimed to be partly co-constituted. In absence of that tie, the two experiences, if they existed, would run merely in parallel. This shows that the constitutive link between the two we-experiences is established by their underlying self-understanding.[13]

This result suggests an answer to the question raised at the beginning of section 2. The question concerned the truth-maker of a general report like:

(1) we ψ together.

The answer is that the generalization is true if it is jointly true that

(2) I experience ψ as ours
(3) You experience ψ as ours

and if the linguistic qualifier "[…] as ours" is linked to one and the same token-identical we-descriptor, which thereby links one experience with the other. To go back to the example, (1) is true, if I lived through the enjoyment as ours and you lived it through as ours, and if, despite the two experiences being numerically distinct, they are mutually interlocked by their underlying we-descriptor.

It is now time to turn to the bad cases. Looking closer at these cases will shed light to two remarks made above. The first remark pinpointed that, for *x* and *y* to mutually constitute each other, *x* would not be the experience it is without *y*, and vice versa. The second concerned the epistemic role allegedly played by the phenomenality of the experience with respect to its structure.

Start with the idea that bad cases are characterised by the following: I have not understood myself as a group member, if you have not understood yourself that way (and vice versa). In fact, bad cases are cases where the subject has *misunderstood* herself as a group member. Of course, the subject might be under the impression of being a group member, but that just is a misapprehension—what she considers to be an understanding of herself, as a matter of fact, turns out to be a misunderstanding. It therefore appears that how to qualify some parts of one subject's mental life depends on the mental life of other subjects: when it comes to my social identity, it is how you understand yourself that determines how I understand myself.

This has two important consequences for an account of we-experiences. The first is this. Although a thought of mine appears to me as a we-thought ("I am a member of us"), the we-descriptor that I activate to frame myself is an impostor. It pretends to be a genuine descriptor, but it masquerades itself as such

[13] All this takes for granted that one subject is aware that the other is undergoing an experience (and vice versa), which indicates that the social self is one—but also only one—pre-condition of we-experiences. Other conditions are equally important and social cognition is one among them. The examples discussed in this paper implicitly introduce social cognition in the account insofar as they all involve face-to-face encounters, which makes them fulfil the condition that the two subjects are in each other's perceptual fields. More should be said about cases in which this condition is relaxed and on how experiential sharing relates to various forms of social cognition.

for there is no *us* to begin with. And there is no *us* to begin with because you don't have the relevant we-thought: the triadic relation has collapsed (or rather: has never been established). As a consequence, I am not occupying any such we-thought in the bad case. If that is correct, then the aspect of the experience that this fake descriptor contributes to shape cannot be for-us-ness. Why? Well, this is precisely because for-us-ness presupposes a genuine we-descriptor in terms of which the subject thinks of herself, which is lacking in the bad case, given that the other does not reciprocate. This consideration unveils an important sense according to which one subject's experience would not be the (we-)experience it is—that is, one subject's experience would not have the subjective character it has—unless the other subject lives through a we-experience.

The second consequence concerns for-us-ness epistemic function. In the bad case, it looks from the subject's perspective as if she lived through her experience as ours. Despite this seeming, the experience does not qualify as a we-experience, though. It does not because it does not exemplify genuine for-us-ness, as we have just seen. To put this another way, an experience exemplifies for-us-ness only in the good case: that subjective property is thus committal to—and therefore revelatory of—the experience being a we-experience.[14] Disjunctively, an experience either exemplifies for-us-ness (and is partly co-constituted by the other we-experience) or it does not, in which case it is not co-constituted by the other we-experience.

4. Conclusions

Time to recap. The paper claimed that we-experiences are constitutively interlocked with each other and have a peculiar subjective character. Their subjective character derives from a social identity, i.e., from a self-understanding as group-member (a PPR). This self-understanding is one pre-condition for these experiences as it enables a self-representing intention which transforms for-me-ness into for-us-ness. Their inter-constitution also derives from that specific self-understanding: it is part and parcel of me understanding myself as a group member that you, too, understand yourself that way. The "we" in terms of which I understand myself is the same "we" in terms of which you think of yourself. Accordingly, the subjective character of my we-experience coincides with the subjective character of your experience, linking the two experiences to each other.

Can these results be applied to collective intentionality as such and to all kinds of mental states that populate our psychology? No. As mentioned in the introduction, the paper has a very narrow focus: it addressed we-experiences as phenomenally conscious experiences (mainly: affective experiences) lived through by a very limited number of individuals in face-to-face encounters. However, these cases can be contended to have pivotal relevance to the phenomenon of collective intentionality. Some final considerations may sustain this point (see also Zahavi 2015).

First, a thought on scalability offers itself. It seems plausible to contend that our understanding of large scale and complex group phenomena should begin with our understanding of smaller and simpler group phenomena. If that's correct, then better start with collective intentionality in small groups. Second, this is the rationale for focusing on sharing of conscious experiences: it is an arguably contentious issue

[14] From the subject's perspective, the experience in the bad case is at least in principle indiscernible from the one she has in the good case. How can one know to be in the good or in the bad case? It exceeds the purposes of this paper to address this question, but it can be argued that socio-cognitive abilities are able to provide an answer to this question: mutual gaze exchange, tracking facial expressions, etc. help the subject determine in which of the two scenarios she happens to be in.

whether there can be intentionality (in the robust sense exemplified by states with intentional content) without phenomenal consciousness. This applies to individual intentionality and, by extension, should apply to collective intentionality as well (see Overgaard/Salice 2019). Therefore, it may be recommendable to begin an investigation into these issues by looking at less controversial cases of (individual or collective) intentionality—and these are cases involving phenomenal consciousness. Finally, emotional sharing has been argued to be developmentally prior with respect to the sharing of states like beliefs or intentions (Hobson 2002): in a sense, it is via shared emotions that humans learn how to share more complex and cognitively demanding states of the mind.

These considerations suggest that an account of sharing conscious experiences like emotions in dyads is not the last word in an investigation into the extremely variegated and sophisticated forms of sociality humans are capable of. However, it is likely to be the first.

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